



Operator Certification

for Other-Than-Municipal Community & Nontransient Noncommunity Public Water Systems

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Bureau of Drinking Water and Groundwater

January 2001

The New Requirements

A new requirement for two types of small public water systems started in early 2001. Essentially, Other-Than-Municipal (OTM) Community systems and Nontransient Noncommunity (NTNC) systems are now required to have a designated certified operator managing their systems. This requirement took effect on January 1, 2001.

Certification Grace Period

Even though the OTM and NTNC requirements for having a certified operator became effective in January 2001, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources will allow a grace period of 2–3 years to comply. If, after the grace period, these systems do not have a certified operator, the Department will begin enforcement action. The grace period will allow all system owners sufficient time to either contract for a certified operator's service or have one of their employees obtain certification.

Why are we doing this?

These new OTM and NTNC certified operator requirements are in response to the 1996 amendments to the federal Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). The amendments required states to adopt and begin implementing an Operator Certification Program for OTM and NTNC systems by February 5, 2001.

Wisconsin Administrative Code NR 114 previously included certification requirements for municipal public water systems only. The revised Wis. Adm. Code NR 114 is available on the Internet at www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/code/nr/nr114.pdf.

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What kind of system are you? And other terms to help you understand this information.

- **Other-Than-Municipal System:** a community water system that is not owned by a municipality. Examples include mobile home parks, apartment buildings, and condominium associations.
- **Nontransient Noncommunity System:** a water system that regularly serves at least 25 of the same people over 6 months of the year and is not a community water system. Examples include schools, day care centers, and factories.
- **Operator-in-charge:** the person designated by the owner of a water system to be in direct responsible charge of operations of the water system.
- **Direct responsible charge:** to provide detailed on-site technical direction of the operation of a water system.

Operator Certification will be important to ensuring that all OTM and NTNC water systems are operated properly and meet state and federal requirements. The program will also help to improve the ability of public water systems to provide safe drinking water.



What is a Certified Operator?

A certified operator is a person that passes a written examination and subsequently obtains 6 hours of continuing education credits every 3 years to renew/

maintain his/her certification. Training courses will be available to help applicants prepare for the exam. Courses will be held directly prior to the exams.

Certification Exam and Continuing Education

DNR is currently in the process of developing training courses and examinations that will allow persons to obtain OTM and NTNC operator certification. **The training courses and examinations are expected to start in early fall 2001.** Courses and exams will be held in locations throughout the state. The DNR will notify OTM and NTNC water systems, in advance, when and where courses and exams are scheduled.



The training course and exam will most likely cover a variety of important drinking water topics, including sampling procedures, water system operation and maintenance, record keeping, and public noticing, to name a few.

Fees for Certification

Water system operators will be required to pay a fee to obtain certification as well as renew certification every three years:

- Each written examination:\$25
- Three-year renewal (per certification): ...\$45
- Late renewal penalty (per certification): ..\$25

Contracting with a Certified Operator

OTM or NTNC systems will be allowed to contract with a certified operator rather than employing their own certified operator. The "contracted" certified operator, if this method of compliance is chosen, will need to oversee the system operation and be "on-call" to address problems and/or any emergencies with the drinking water system. DNR currently does not have a list of certified operators that will provide this service, but we expect to have one in the future.

Where can I learn more?

To request more Operator Certification information:

- Write: Peggy O'Donnell
Wisconsin DNR, SS/6
Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921
- E-mail: odonnp@dnr.state.wi.us
- Or contact your regional DNR drinking water person.
- You can also check out DNR's drinking water web site: www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/water/dwg/.



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